

## CHAPTER 5

### Combat Units

#### Section I. General

##### 5-1. Composition.

The military force conducting counter guerrilla operations may not necessarily consist of only light infantry. This chapter discusses the various types of combat units that maybe available to the counter guerrilla force. The composition of the tactical force to be used in counter guerrilla operations — in other words, whether to use forces other than light infantry — depends upon the forces available and the threat that is faced.

##### 5-2. Restricted firepower.

Generally, because of political, economic, and sociological considerations that restrict the use of firepower, the farther the insurgency moves toward Phase III, the greater the combat power that can be utilized (Figure 5-1 ). In a conventional conflict, the same factors of availability of forces and the Threat are considered, but combat power can be applied at higher levels.

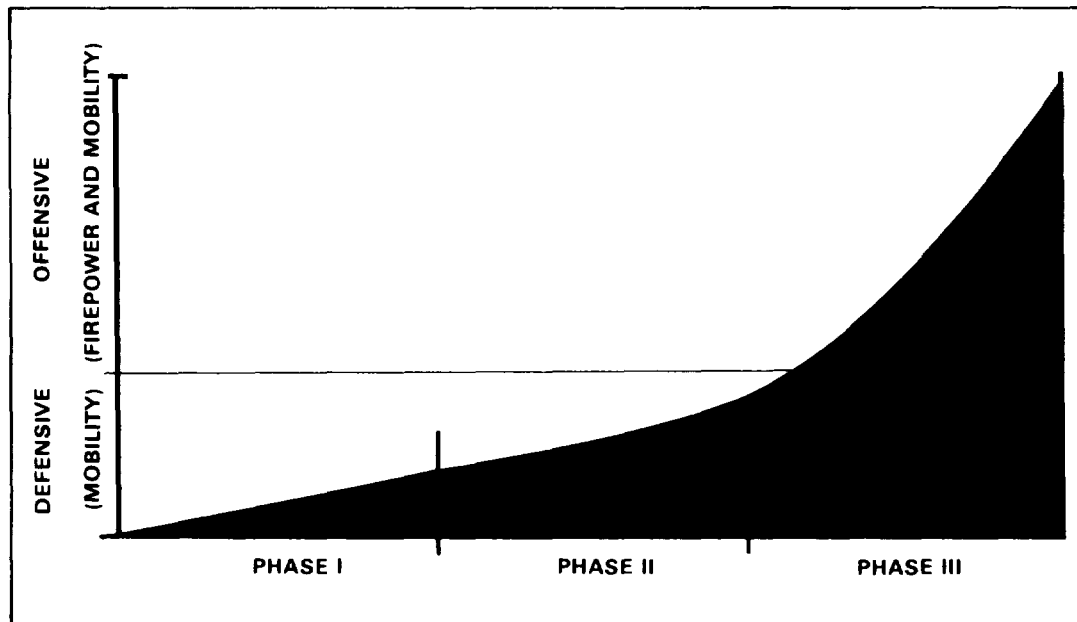


Figure 5-1. Combat power can be applied at higher levels.

## Section II. Counterinsurgency Environment

### 5-3. Type forces.

The types of forces that maybe employed (other than light infantry) are infantry, airborne, air assault, mechanized infantry, armor, armored cavalry, and aviation. Terrain, enemy forces, and capabilities must be thoroughly assessed when deciding how to utilize these forces. The impact of these forces on the populace must also be assessed before they are employed. Normally, the majority of ground combat elements are organized to fight as light infantry. However, the proper use of other combat forces can provide the counterguerrilla force advantages.

### 5-4. Use of combat power.

- a. The primary consideration is that counterguerrilla operations support the host country's IDAD plan. Extensive use of combat forces (other than infantry) in this environment is usually restricted because of limitations on the use of heavy weapons and their collateral damage. In addition, the guerrilla habitually chooses to operate from terrain that affords him protection (Figure 5-1). Usually, this type of terrain is rough, inaccessible, and restrictive to ground vehicles. Military forces engaged in counterguerrilla warfare must make maximum effective use of all available assets, even if this means reorganizing and retraining as light infantry, utilizing organic combat vehicles in a supporting role for transportation only.
- b. The measure of effectiveness of an asset is contained in the concept of suitability. The extent to which various types of forces can be effectively utilized must be measured against the following criteria to determine if they will be suitable.

### 5-5. Impact on the populace.

The commander must determine both the physical and psychological impact of using additional combat assets. In all cases, their use must fall within any restrictions stated in the rules of engagement. In addition, the psychological effect of the expanded use of firepower or assets might result in the perception that the government forces are losing or ineffective.

### 5-6. Meets the threat.

The commander must ensure that the additional assets he plans to employ do not "overkill" the threat. If the threat is a light infantry force of company size working in groups of five to ten men, then it is not really suitable to have a battalion of armor arrayed against it.

## **5-7. Capability to accomplish assigned mission.**

- a. The additional assets utilized must have the capability to perform tactical and IDAD missions. When determining if the additional assets do have the capability, the threat's capabilities, structure, weapons, and level of training must be considered.
- b. In addition, the impact of the terrain on the force must be determined. All of these factors must be weighed to determine if the type of force that is going to be used will be an asset or a liability. These same factors, plus the psychological factor, determine if the force can support the accomplishment of the overall IDAD objective, which is to defeat the insurgency by winning the support of the populace for the host country government.

### **(1) Airborne.**

- (a) The essential difference between airborne forces and other combat forces employed against guerrillas is the capability of parachuting into an area. An airborne infantry unit conducts ground tactical operations in the same general manner as other infantry units.
- (b) Since airborne forces become light infantry upon insertion into an operational area, they can be used effectively in counter guerrilla operations. The primary advantage of using this type of force is that it enables the commander to position a large infantry force in a short period. In addition, when inserting small elements into a guerrilla-controlled or contested area, this method may provide a relatively clandestine means of insertion. Airborne operations are dependent on several factors, to include drop zone availability, airframe availability, terrain, and weather. In most cases, airborne operations can be used effectively to insert forces into suitable areas in all phases of insurgency. (For further information on airborne operations, see FM 7-10, FM 7-20, and FM 7-30.)

### **(2) Air assault.**

- (a) The helicopter provides battlefield mobility to the counter guerrilla force that usually cannot be matched by the guerrilla force. Air assault forces provide a valuable contribution through the tactic of vertical envelopment. They give the force commander the means to rapidly disperse and concentrate forces at the critical time and place and then quickly extract the force and employ it in a different area, if needed. The fundamental characteristic of air assault operations is

the use of helicopters to provide a tactical mobility advantage over the enemy. No other force on the battlefield can respond to a tactical situation and move considerable distances as rapidly as air assault forces.

- (b) Air assault forces can:
  - Attack enemy positions from any direction.
  - Strike objectives in otherwise inaccessible areas.
  - Overfly or bypass barriers and obstacles, to include NBC area contamination.
- Ž Conduct raids using helicopters to insert and withdraw forces.
  - Concentrate, disperse, or redeploy rapidly to extended their area of influence.
  - Provide the commander flexibility by allowing him to retain a smaller reserve and commit a larger portion of his force to action.
  - React rapidly to tactical opportunities and necessities.
  - Place forces rapidly at tactically decisive points in the battle area.
  - Provide surveillance over a wide area.
- (c) Air assault forces, while suited to counter guerrilla operations, have limitations that must be considered:
  - Weather extremes that hamper or stop aircraft flights.
  - Helicopter lift capacity that restricts the type and quantity of supporting weapons and equipment that can be airlifted into the battle area.
  - Air lines of communications, once inserted.
  - Enemy tactical aircraft, air defense, and electronic warfare systems.
  - Reduced mobility on completion of air movement.
- Ž Increased vulnerability during loading and landing phases.
- (d) Flexibility, mobility, and speed are the key advantages of utilizing air assault forces. In counter guerrilla operations, the effective use of these advantages may be a critical function for the commander. While seeking to employ this type of force to maximize its strengths, the commander must also ensure that he realizes these

operations have limitations and vulnerabilities. The advantages and limitations must be weighed in terms of the concept of suitability to determine if air assault forces should be used in a given situation. In almost all cases, air assault forces are well suited for use in all phases of insurgency. (For further information on air assault operations, see FM 90-4.)

(3) **Mechanized infantry.**

- (a) Mechanized infantry forces, fighting mounted, are not particularly suited for engaging guerrilla forces in combat action on restricted terrain. However, terrain permitting, the ability of infantry fighting vehicles and armored personnel carriers to move forces rapidly about the battlefield may give the counterguerrilla force a mobility advantage and a distinct firepower advantage. These advantages let the force close on guerrilla locations mounted and then complete its mission.
- (b) Because of the terrain the guerrilla habitually operates on, and the tactics he normally employs, opportunities to conduct traditional mechanized infantry operations against him are extremely limited. When this is the case, the mechanized force must be prepared to either abandon its carriers or use them only as a means of transport to the battle area where the mechanized force will fight on foot. Terrain permitting, the advantage in speed and mobility may allow for a larger area of operations than is within the capability of a totally light force of similar size.
- (c) In most cases, mechanized forces may have a role in:
  - Providing convoy escort.
  - Providing mobility for reserves.
  - Conducting show-of-force operations.
  - Assisting in base defenses.
  - Participating in an economy-of-force role when large areas require speed and mobility for adequate coverage while crossing NBC contaminated areas.
  - Providing limited armor protection against light small arms fire.
  - Participating in air assault operations.
- (d) Mechanized forces are normally suitable to be employed as a maneuver combat element only in the later stages of Phase III insurgency.

- (e) In Phases I and II, depending upon the situation, mechanized forces may be used for transport to the battle area because of their speed and mobility. (For further information on mechanized infantry employment, see FM 71-1, FM 71-2, and FM 71-3.)

(4) **Armor.**

- (a) Armor forces are usually employed with accompanying infantry, but as with mechanized infantry forces, armor forces are not particularly suited for use as a maneuver combat element in a counterinsurgency environment. An armored force does provide firepower, protection, speed, and shock effect. These are usually advantages. Its capabilities are decreased and its vulnerabilities are increased in close and rough terrain. The difficulty in using armored forces is due to the restrictions placed on the use of firepower and increased vulnerability because of environment. Normally, the terrain that is involved is close, restrictive, and generally suited to light infantry forces. Further restrictions placed on what is generally considered its strongpoint — firepower — result in an overall increase in vulnerabilities and a decrease in capabilities when using an armored force in counterinsurgency operations.
- (b) In most cases, armored forces may be used in:
  - Providing convoy escort.
  - Providing mobility for reserves.
  - Conducting show-of-force operations.
  - Assisting in base defenses.
  - Participating in an economy-of-force role when large areas require speed and mobility for adequate coverage.
- (c) During counterinsurgency operations, an armored force can usually be used as a maneuver combat element only in the later stages of Phase III. In Phases I and II, its role is very limited. In these phases, armored forces are usually effective when supporting base defenses and show-of-force operations. (For further information on armor operations, see FM 71-1, FM 71-2, and FM 71-3.)

(5) **Armored cavalry.**

- (a) The basic tasks of an armored cavalry unit are reconnaissance and security. Terrain permitting, such units may help the commander cover larger areas

because of their speed and mobility. The armored cavalry force will suffer the same vulnerabilities as mechanized infantry and armor if the members or the force remain tied to their vehicles. For these reasons, they can best be used for:

- Securing bases.
- Patrolling large areas.
- Providing quick reaction forces and mobile reserves.

- (b) When properly utilized and tailored to fit the situation, armored cavalry can accomplish the specific missions listed in all phases of an insurgency. As the conflict progresses into Phase II, terrain permitting, armored cavalry units begin to take on a more traditional role and operate in a conventional manner. (For further information on armored cavalry operations, see FM 17-95.)

(6) **Aviation.**

- (a) **Types.** Three types of aviation units maybe available for use in counter guerrilla operations: air cavalry troops, attack helicopter battalions, and combat aviation companies.
- (b) **Air cavalry troops.** These perform the same missions of reconnaissance and security as ground cavalry. Because of its 'greater mobility, air cavalry can reconnoiter and maintain surveillance over a much larger area than its ground counterpart. For this reason, depending upon the situation, air cavalry units are usually suited for employment in counter guerrilla operations in all phases of an insurgency.
- (c) **Attack helicopter battalions.** These provide highly maneuverable, aerial-delivered firepower. When these assets are used, the ordnance mix must reflect the type of threat being faced. In Phases I and II, the threat is usually light infantry, and a higher proportion of 20-mm rounds and 2.75-inch rockets is preferable to heavier antiarmor ordnance. As the conflict moves into Phase III, and if the guerrilla force starts to use mechanized or armored assets, a higher proportion of antiarmor ordnance maybe preferable. Attack helicopters use natural cover and speed to compensate for their vulnerabilities. They are suited for situations in which rapid reaction time is important or where terrain restricts ground forces. A vital element to the effectiveness of these units is the suppression of enemy air defense

(SEAD). SEAD is any activity that neutralizes, destroys, or temporarily degrades enemy air defense systems in a specific area. Means of doing this include the employment of artillery or United States Air Force (USAF) and Army forces. Depending on the situation, attack helicopter units are usually suited for combat in all phases of an insurgency.

- (d) **Combat aviation companies.** These units give dismounted infantry tactical mobility by moving combat elements as the commander dictates. They can also provide critical supplies to areas when ground lines of communication have been interdicted or overloaded. Depending on the situation, combat support aviation units are suited to all phases of an insurgency. Because of their speed, mobility, and flexibility, aviation assets can provide an advantage if properly employed in most situations. (For further information on aviation operations, see FM 1-100, FM 17-50, and FM 90-4.)

### Section III. Conventional Conflict Environments

#### 5-8. Concepts.

In conventional conflict counter guerrilla operations, forces other than infantry take on larger roles. Their participation conforms more to the concepts outlined for their use in rear battle doctrine. In these environments, there are usually fewer restrictions on the use of firepower.

#### 5-9. Considerations.

- a. Two major considerations, when employing forces other than infantry, are suitability and availability.
- b. Maneuver force mission suitability is usually discussed in terms of METT-T. The commander must weigh the advantages and disadvantages of using his force against the factors of METT-T. If the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, then the force is employed.
- c. The commander must make the most effective use of all the forces he has available. If a particular force would be more suitable but is not readily available, the commander should seek to procure it. If he cannot, then he maximizes the effects of those assets that he has available.
- d. In conventional conflicts, the use of combined arms is more effective in almost all situations rather than the use of any single type of combat force.



- e . The primary considerations in planning counter guerrilla operations, using combined arms, are the factors of METT-T (FM 100-5).